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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION PRESIDENT BUSH'S VISIT TO AFRICA;
HARARE

1. President George W. Bush's visit to Africa remains the top issue for discussion in lengthy editorials being carried in the mainstream newspapers ahead of the July 7 - 12 visit. Excerpts follow:

2. Under headline "Bush must respect African leadership" the government-controlled daily "The Herald" (07/07), comments:

"American leader Mr. George W. Bush begins his first visit to Africa. . .with very dirty hands after his alleged bungling in Iraq. American and British troops stand accused of slaughtering thousands of unarmed civilians including women and children during the U. S.-led invasion of Iraq. . .Mr. Bush will be hoping to make the whole world believe that America cares about Africa despite ample evidence to the contrary. . .Whatever his real motive for coming to Africa, Mr. Bush had better not dictate things to anyone, lest, as President Mugabe warned over the weekend, he be spurned. . .While we know that no African leader worth his salt and who really knows America will accept to be used by the likes of Mr. Bush, we think an opportunity has arisen for the Texan to experience first-hand the rock-solid unity prevalent in Africa. . . ."

3. Under headline "Bush visit: What's in it for Zimbabwe" the independent weekly "The Standard" (07/06), comments:

". . .Whether President Mugabe and ZANU PF choose to dismiss the visit as a non-event or not, the point must be forcefully made that each of the countries to be visited is moving ahead while Zimbabwe is definitely retreating back to Stone Age. This is the reality which is staring us in the face. . .Describing Colin Powell as a 'disgraceful Uncle Tom' and other such vitriol might be what Jonathan Moyo (Information Minister) believes he is paid for, but it certainly will not bring food on the tables of long suffering Zimbabweans. It was, in terms of foreign relations, an extraordinary inept thing to say even for a government not known for its delicacy of diplomacy. If these crude and undignified attacks on President Bush and U. S. Secretary of State Colin Powell were being made from a position of strength, perhaps we would be more guarded in our criticism. . .This paper emphatically agrees with Colin Powell. . .However, by the same token, we share the view that the U. S. should not adopt the role of a world policeman advocating a regime change. Rather it should concentrate its energies on helping the people of Zimbabwe and African leaders resolve a specific political problem such as the one in this country. Yes, the United States might be the leader of the free world, is a great democracy, a military super power and a nation unequalled in material wealth. But all that does not give it the right to act as a world policeman and calling for regime changes wherever there is a problem. Our advice to the U. S. is that acting in this high handed manner can only alienate people and needlessly lose the goodwill of its friends in Africa. Powell's dramatic language ran the risk of being interpreted as war-mongering and parallels being drawn with the Iraq war. . .The U. S. administration's criticism of the Mugabe regime is very valid. . .But in his meeting with Presidents Mbeki and Obasanjo, President Bush is advised not to display a one-eyed view of the continent. While making his analysis of the Zimbabwe crisis clear, he must also be prepared to listen carefully to what the African leaders will have to say and move in tandem with them for the resolution of the Zimbabwean crisis. . . ."

4. Under headline "Bush visit no panacea to our problems" the pro-government weekly "The Sunday Mirror" (07/06)

comments:

"We reiterate our position that U. S. President, George W. Bush's visit to the southern African region this week will not have any impact on Zimbabwe. . . For those hoping that Bush will effect a regime change in Zimbabwe. . . we urge them to study that prospect more realistically and not be blinded by the euphoria of expectations that has clouded sound vision among their ranks. . . It is not important for us to point out that Liberia presents the most nagging challenge for the Americans at the moment and that if any imminent action is demanded of the U. S. right now, it is on that beleaguered West African state. . . On the resolution of Zimbabwe's political impasse and its attendant economic woes, the process initiated by the African troika still presents itself as the only legitimate `road map. . . ' Our message to those who have burdened Bush's imminent visit with their misplaced expectations, therefore, is that they should look inwards for a resolution to the country's problems. The sooner this is done, the quicker our problems are sorted out - by ourselves. . . ."

15. Under headline "Warning to MDC surrogates" the government-controlled Bulawayo-based daily "Chronicle" (07/05), comments:

"The U. S. and Britain. . . are driving terror into many nations in the name of fighting terrorism. . . Of late they have been threatening to include what they call regime change on a number of countries, including Zimbabwe, viewed as not towing the line. . . Bush and his Secretary for State, Collin (sic) Powell have in recent weeks stepped up their vilification of President Mugabe and publicly called for his ouster from power. . . President Mugabe on Thursday told the 54th Ordinary Session of the ruling ZANU PF Central Committee that Africans should not be intimidated by Bush's visit. `He is coming to visit and he should not dare to try what he did to Iraq. He knows the situation is different. After all we do not have oil here,' said an unperturbed President Mugabe. While welcoming . . . Mugabe's words of courage, it is disheartening that there are some sellouts among us, especially within the opposition MDC who appear determined to team up with foreigners like Bush to destabilize the country. . . This business of teaming up with foreigners against your brother is un-African . . . As South African President Thabo Mbeki said recently, the problems affecting Zimbabwe can be solved by Zimbabweans. Neighbors and the international community can only assist. We urge MDC and British and American masters to take President Mbeki's advice very seriously to avoid embarrassing themselves. . . ."

16. Under headline "The root of misrule in Zimbabwe" the independent weekly "Zimbabwe Independent" (07/04) comments:

". . . U. S. Secretary of State Colin Powell's comparison of Zimbabwe's regime with that of Burma's, where state violence against a popular opposition has ensured for that country the reputation of a rogue state, appears to have stung members of Mugabe's inner circle. And so it should. Zimbabwe's international standing has been prejudiced by ongoing state-sponsored terror and impunity for those who have assaulted, tortured and killed members of the opposition. Zimbabwe's rulers are getting the reputation they deserve. . . ."

17. Under headline " Bush must tread softly in Africa" the pro-government weekly "Business Tribune" (07/03) comments:

"Threats coming from the U. S. that American President George Bush would `lean hard' on South African President Thabo Mbeki to change his policy on Zimbabwe show that the American administration overestimates the power Mbeki wields over his Zimbabwean counterpart. Also, it shows that America's view of the Zimbabwean problem is overly simplistic. Mbeki. . . long realized that the Zimbabwean problem can only be solved by Zimbabweans themselves without undue influence from interested parties such as Britain and America. . . In a way Bush's expected posturing in South Africa next week might reverse the little gains achieved so far. Bush's African tour must be seen in the bigger picture of his attempt to cow the African continent into submitting to American dominance of world trade. In his remarks to the Corporate Council on Africa's U. S.-Africa Business Summit. . . Bush betrayed the true purpose of his tour, namely that

it was more about American interests than anything else. . . . By `leaning hard' on Mbeki next week Bush's intention is simply to add him to the list of submissive African heads of state prepared to mortgage their countries' sovereignty to American imperialism. Bush should tread softly on his path in Africa."

SULLIVAN